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Special Class for Pupils with Specific Speech and Language Disorder

Admissions Policy 2024 - 2025

1. Introduction:

This policy sets out to explain the enrolment process for pupils with Specific Speech & Language Disorders (SSLD) in the Junior SSLD class in St. Marnock's NS. This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000. The guidelines set out in the Department of Education (DE) circular 0038/2007 are also referred to. This policy is further informed by the DE Inspectorate report 'Educational Provision for pupils with SSLD' (April 2021).

This policy should be read in conjunction with St. Marnock's NS Admissions policy and the Annual Admissions notice.

The Board of Management trusts that this policy will assist parents/guardians in relation to enrolment criteria and procedures for the Specific Speech & Language Disorder Class in St. Marnock's NS.

The Board of Management and the Principal will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from the policy.

As the Junior SSLD class in St. Marnock's NS and the SSLD class in Stapolin ETNS accept referrals from the same catchment area, both schools work in close collaboration with each other with regard to their Admissions policies.

2. Developmental Language Disorder

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is the up to date term for 'Specific Speech & Language Disorder or Impairment' (SSLD/SSLI).

In May 2017 the Irish Association of Speech & Language Therapists (IASLT) launched a Position Paper & Guidance Document called 'Supporting Children with Developmental Language Disorder in Ireland'.

The term Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is the current term now in use in Ireland to refer to a wider group of clients. This term replaces the terminology of Specific Speech & Language Impairment (SSLI) or Specific Speech & Language Disorder (SSLD). The IASLT has set up an implementation group regarding the new terminology.

The current Department of Education (DE) criteria for referral to an SSLD Class have not changed. These classes continue to be referred to as an SSLD Class- Specific Speech & Language Disorder Class- by the DE.

Children with DLD are generally described as a heterogeneous group. Different profiles of language difficulty may be described, for example children

- whose understanding and production of language is equally impaired
- who have a considerable gap between understanding and production
- with particular difficulties with one or more specific aspects of language form, for example grammar, semantics, phonology or language use.

One option within the clinical care pathway for provision of a Speech & Language Therapy (SLT) service to children with DLD is by means of enrolment within a specific class. These classes, termed SSLD (Specific Speech & Language Disorder) classes by the DE offer intensive speech & language therapy which is integrated with the child's academic development.

Children eligible for referral to the SSLD class under the current DE criteria are a specific sub-group of children with a diagnosis of DLD.

3. Rationale:

For school aged children with DLD (previously known as SSLD) in the Republic of Ireland an arrangement exists between the Department of Education (DE) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) to provide school-based Speech and Language Therapy to suitable candidates through attendance at a Specific Speech & Language Disorder class.

Children referred to the class must live within a specific catchment area of the HSE Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City & County (Dublin North & Coolock Network). Children due to be enrolled in the Language Class may be eligible for free transport to the school under the terms of the DE School Transport Scheme.

The aim of the class is to address the pupils' Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) through appropriate education and intensive speech and language therapy within the context of a broad and balanced primary school curriculum.

As per DE guidelines the Language Class provides a curriculum that while similar to that followed to their peers in mainstream classes, has a particular and constant emphasis on the language involved in each subject area. It also provides for intensive speech and language therapy and collaborative programmes between the Language Class Teacher and SLT and parents/guardians. Irish is not part of the Language Class curriculum.

4. Limitation on Places and Duration of Placement:

St. Marnock's NS Language Class was set up in 1998. The aim of the class is to provide children who meet the DE criteria and the local criteria for St. Marnock's SSLD Class (see pages 3 – 5), the opportunity to spend one or two years in a small class setting where they can receive intensive educational and speech & language therapy support (DES Circular 0038/2007). **The place is offered**

initially for one year. The class is staffed by a full time Teacher employed by the DE and a part time Speech & Language Therapist employed by the local HSE area. No more than seven children will be enrolled in the class each year.

5. Criteria for Consideration for Enrolment in the Junior SSLD Class:

Both Criteria A and B must be met by the applicant and the application process must be adhered to. Applicants who meet criteria A and B will then be considered under Criteria C.

Criteria A: Department of Education (DE) Criteria

The DE has outlined the eligibility criteria for enrolment in an SSLD Class. These include exclusionary and discretionary criteria in relation to language and IQ scores in children with SSLD. In order to be described as having a specific speech and language disorder in Ireland each applicant should meet each of the following criteria (from the DE Circular 0038/07):

- (i) The applicant must have an Assessment by a psychologist on a standardised test of intelligence, which places the applicant's non-verbal, or performance ability within the average range or above. (i.e. non-verbal IQ of 90, or above).
- (ii) The applicant must have an Assessment on a standardised test of speech/language development by a speech and language therapist which places the applicant's performance in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development at two standard deviations or more below the mean or at a generally equivalent level (2 standard deviations or below, at or below a standard score of 70).
- (iii) The applicant's difficulties are not attributable to hearing impairment; where the applicant is affected to some degree by hearing impairment, the hearing threshold for the speech-related frequencies should be 40Db.
- (iv) Emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes.

Criteria B: Local Criteria for St Marnock's NS Junior SSLD Class

- (i) The applicant must live within the designated catchment area, as determined by the HSE, at the time of referral. At present this catchment area is HSE Community Healthcare Organisation Dublin North City & County (Dublin North). A full list of the addresses covered by this catchment area is available from your local HSE Office.
- (ii) The referral agent must be satisfied that the applicant's needs cannot be met by the current Speech & Language Therapy service provision.
- (iii) Applications are accepted for children who are in Junior Infants, Senior Infants and 1st class on the 23rd February of the year of referral.
- (iv) The applicant must have attended SLT sessions in the 9 months prior to the closing date for applications.

Only applicants who meet criteria A and B above will be considered under Criteria C.

Criteria C: Factors relating to greatest need.

The following factors will be considered in relation to identification of the applicant's needs and those presenting with the greatest need will be offered a place in the class. The adapted New Brunswick Priority Rating Scale (PRS) will be used to identify the applicants with the greatest need under Criteria C under the areas of;

- The impact of Primary Presenting Problem
- The predicted Outcome of Intervention
- The impact of Service Delay

These areas of the PRS will be rated on a 5-point scale with 1 being a low impact score and 5 being a high impact score. The following information will be considered when reviewing individual applications under Criteria C;

1. The applicant's current profile, including standardised assessment results of receptive and expressive language development and speech. Standard scores, percentile ranks, standard deviations and age equivalents should be included where possible.
2. The severity of the applicant's speech impairment i.e. current level of intelligibility, phonological system, oral motor functioning.
3. History of the applicant's involvement to date with speech and language therapy services including the number of therapy sessions attended and/or offered, the focus of therapy and therapy outcomes.
4. Summary of the impact of the applicant's language and/or speech impairment on his/her educational progress
5. Summary of the impact of the applicant's language on his/her social/emotional development.
6. Case history information as included in the SLT Report; Psychology Report and other reports submitted.

6. Referrals:

- Applications for referrals are accepted from Speech and Language Therapists and Psychologists only.
- Applications should be made to the School Principal with the relevant accompanying documentation listed below.
- Parents may make enquiries directly to the School Principal or HSE Speech & Language Therapist regarding the application process & application forms. The child's Speech & Language Therapist or Psychologist co-ordinates the referral to the SSLD class having discussed this in detail with parents/guardians and other professionals involved with the child.

- Parents/guardians are also made aware by referral agents of the limited number of places available each year in the SSLD class, and referral agents should provide a copy of this policy to parents/guardians.
- **The closing date for referrals for the following school year is 23rd February 2024. Please refer to Annual Admissions Notice 2024 – 2025 regarding important dates for applications.**

Required Documentation:

Referrals must be accompanied by **5 copies** of the following documents:

1. **St. Marnock's NS Referral & Consent Form for SSLD Class:** this is completed by the referral agent and parents. A Social, Emotional & Behavioural Rating Scale is included in this form which must be completed by the applicant's SLT and parents/guardians.
2. A recent **Psychological Report** (within the last 2 years of referral date). This should include results of a comprehensive assessment of both non-verbal and verbal ability, including subtest results.
3. An up-to-date **Speech and Language Therapy report** (compiled within 3 months of referral date) confirming a diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). Standard SLT Assessments must have been carried out within the 6 month period prior to referral. The SLT report should include:
 - Summary of case history information
 - History of the applicant's involvement to date with speech and language therapy services including the number of therapy sessions attended and/or offered; the focus of therapy and therapy outcomes.
 - Description of the applicant's current profile, including standardised assessment results of receptive and expressive language development and speech. Standard scores, percentile ranks, standard deviations and age equivalents should be included where possible.
 - Where relevant, an indication of the severity of the applicant's speech impairment i.e. current level of intelligibility, phonological system, oral motor functioning. A short phonological transcription should be included.
 - Summary of the impact of the applicant's language and/or speech impairment on his/her educational progress and social/emotional development.
4. **St. Marnock's NS School Teacher Report Form for SSLD Class:** Reports should be completed by the applicant's Class Teacher and Special Education Teacher (where relevant) on the standard School report Form for Referral to SSLD Class. A Social, Emotional & Behavioural Rating Scale is included in this form.
5. **Other Reports:** if relevant (e.g. Audiology, OT, Medical, Social, Psychiatry).
6. **A cover letter to the School Principal** should accompany the above documentation. This must be signed and dated by the referral agent.

All documentation and information received is strictly private and confidential.

7. Application process:

Following the closing date for referrals, as set out in the Annual Admissions Notice for the class, applications for enrolment in the SSLD class are reviewed by an Admissions Advisory Committee (AAC) comprising educational and clinical professionals. The members of the committee are as follows:

- The School Principal of St. Marnock's N.S.
- The Class Teacher of St. Marnock's NS SSLD class
- The HSE Speech and Language Therapist assigned to the class
- The HSE Speech and Language Therapy Manager from the local area
- The HSE Principal Clinical Psychologist from the local area

The role of the Admissions Advisory Committee can be described as follows:

- To make recommendations to the Board of Management regarding the admission, retention/discharge of children in the SSLD class
- To evaluate and process new applications in light of Criteria A and Criteria B

In the event of oversubscription, all applications which meet Criteria A and B will be considered under Criteria C. A waiting list will be formed for unsuccessful applicants and this waiting list will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought.

The AAC will place unsuccessful applications on the waiting list for the Junior SSLD class in the order of priority assigned to the application, after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this policy.

In the event of undersubscription of pupils meeting the DE criteria in either the Junior SSLD class in St. Marnock's NS or the Senior SSLD class in Stapolin Educate Together NS, both Principals will liaise to ensure that all available places are filled with pupils who meet the Department of Education criteria.

In the unlikely event where there is spare capacity in the Junior SSLD class because of insufficient eligible children, the Principal on behalf of the Board of Management may offer a place to a maximum of two pupils who do not meet the eligibility criteria but who could benefit from enrolment in the class for one year on a concessionary basis. Such placements must be supported by the recommendation of a Speech and Language Therapist and/or Psychologist. The question of continued enrolment of these pupils for a second year can only be considered once all eligible pupils have been accommodated. The NCSE through the local SENO will monitor such situations. (Circular 0038/2007)

Late applications who meet Criteria A and B will be added to the end of the existing waiting list of unsuccessful applicants in date order of being received.

Offers of any subsequent places that become available during the school year to which admission is being sought, will be made to applicants in the order in which they are placed on the waiting list.

Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the relevant Annual Admissions Notice. If an applicant is not offered a place in the Junior SSLD class, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details

of the applicant's place on the waiting list for the school year or class concerned. Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision.

Written acceptance or rejection of the offer must be received by the school within seven calendar days from the date of the offer letter issued to the parent/guardian of the applicant.

If the offer is not accepted within the above timeframe, the place is forfeited. The Principal will write to the parents/guardians informing them that the place in the class is no longer available for their child and that place in the class will now be offered to the applicant at the top of the waiting list.

The Principal of St. Marnock's NS also notifies the successful applicant's current school Principal of the decision to offer a place in the Junior SSLD Class.

Letters to parents/guardians offering a place to their child or informing them that the application was invalid/unsuccessful will also be copied to the referral agent.

The school enrolment procedure is then followed and where pupils are eligible and wish to avail of transport provided by the Department of Education the relevant forms for this are also completed. Applicants are accepted on the basis that they and their parents/guardians accept and understand the school's Code of Behaviour Policy and all other school policies.

8. Appeals

In the letter to parents/guardians of children not offered places, parents/guardians are advised that they are entitled to appeal this decision, under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998. In general, appeals must be made within 42 days of receipt of the BOM's decision.

Please note that the procedure for appeals is outlined in detail on pages 9, 10 of St. Marnock's N.S. Admissions policy.

Ratified by Board of Management:

Date: 19th October 2023

Chairperson: _____ **Principal:** _____
Ciarán McCormack Sinéad Trimble

Review date: October 2024